



**PRESS RELEASE**  
**13 March 2018**

## **The Sixteen presents music by Cornysh and Britten on its annual Choral Pilgrimage: Sacred and Profane April – November 2018**

### **The Sixteen**

**Harry Christophers** CBE *conductor*

**Eamonn Dougan** *associate conductor* (for selected performance)

The Sixteen's annual Choral Pilgrimage returns in 2018 to explore the sacred and secular music of William Cornysh and Benjamin Britten: beginning in St Albans Cathedral on 14 April, the tour runs for 28 performances across beautiful venues all over Britain.

William Cornysh and Benjamin Britten were prolific in both sacred and secular music. Cornysh is actually two people, often confused with one another and quite possibly father and son. Both originated in Westminster, the Elder died in 1502 and the Younger in 1523, of whom much more is known. The matter of telling which man wrote which works is impossible to settle, therefore for the purpose of this programme the two composers are linked as one. Whether it be the Elder or the Younger, fortunately they not only excelled at writing complex and adventurous antiphons for the church but also beautiful secular songs for the Tudor court. For Britten writing in the 20th-century life was very different; he is a composer who encompassed so many facets of music excelling in opera, solo song and all manners of vocal and instrumental music.

This programme looks at the way these two composers mixed sacred with secular. Whilst Cornysh's sacred music is elaborate and rhythmically complicated, his secular music is simple yet subtly evocative. Britten makes constant demands on vocal artistry, best displayed in the last work he ever wrote for unaccompanied voices, *Sacred and Profane*, composed in the winter of 1974-5. Britten chose his texts with great care and devotion: these are mediaeval lyrics and give a fascinating mixture of the devotional and the rumbustiously secular. The final song *A death* is a wicked blend of horror and gallows humour far removed from the melancholic canon *Ah Robin* by Cornysh.

The Sixteen continues to invest in a number of dynamic education and outreach projects with the aim of engaging further with its current audience and also developing a new one. The ethos of access and support runs throughout their thriving education programme. Whether it's introducing oratorio to babies, mentoring choristers across the country, working with over 1,000 Key Stage 2 pupils in the Schools' Matinee Concerts, nurturing student composers and conductors, exploring the fascinating stories behind the music on Insight Days, or working with 800 amateur singers through the Choral Workshop Series, The Sixteen delight in inviting those who enjoy choral music, of all ages and backgrounds, to join in. During the tour The Sixteen undertake 8 choral workshops, 7 chorister workshops, an Insight Day and a schools' matinee project in four locations: Carlisle, Lancaster, Liverpool and Peterborough.

There is an accompanying tour CD, *Sacred and Profane* (COR16159), released on The Sixteen's own label CORO, available to buy now: <https://thesixteenshop.com/products/cor16159>

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### **Listings and programme**

**14 April 2018, 7.30pm**, St Albans Cathedral  
**20 April 2018, 7.30pm**, Winchester Cathedral  
**9 May 2018, 7.30pm**, Old Royal Naval College Chapel, Greenwich  
**16 May 2018, 7.30pm**, Hereford Cathedral  
**17 May 2018, 7.30pm**, Llandaff Cathedral  
**18 May 2018, 7.30pm**, Truro Cathedral  
**19 May 2018, 7.30pm**, Exeter Cathedral  
**25 May 2018, 8pm**, Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford  
**7 June 2018, 7.30pm**, The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester  
**5 July 2018, 7.30pm**, Carlisle Cathedral  
**6 July 2018, 7.30pm**, Lancaster Priory  
**7 July 2018, 7.30pm**, Hull Minster  
**11 July 2018, 7.30pm**, York Minster  
**7 September 2018, 7.30pm**, Wells Cathedral  
**8 September 2018, 7.30pm**, Tewkesbury Abbey  
**11 September 2018, 7.30pm**, St James's Church, Spanish Place, London  
**19 September 2018, 7.30pm**, All Saints Church, Northampton  
**1 October 2018, 7.30pm**, Croydon Minster\*  
**3 October 2018, 7.30pm**, Coventry Cathedral  
**4 October 2018, 7.30pm**, Southwell Minster  
**5 October 2018, 7.30pm**, Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral  
**6 October 2018, 7.30pm**, Blackburn Cathedral  
**19 October 2018, 8pm**, St John's College Chapel, Cambridge  
**24 October 2018, 7.30pm**, Peterborough Cathedral  
**25 October 2018, 7.30pm**, Sheffield Anglican Cathedral  
**26 October 2018, 7.30pm**, Durham Cathedral  
**27 October 2018, 7.30pm**, Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh  
**9 November 2018, 7.30pm**, Kings Place, London

Britten *Hymn to the Virgin*

Cornysh *My love she mourneth*

Britten *Hymn to Saint Cecilia*

Cornysh *Salve Regina*

Britten *Advance Democracy*

Cornysh *Ave Maria, Mater Dei*

Cornysh *Woefully array'd*

Cornysh *Ah Robin, gentle Robin*

Britten *Sacred and Profane*

\*conducted by Eamonn Dougan

### **Notes to Editors**

#### **About The Sixteen**

The Sixteen is recognised as one of the world's greatest ensembles. Comprising both choir and period-instrument orchestra, The Sixteen strives to take beautiful and inspiring choral music, from the Renaissance and Baroque to the present day, to as wide and diverse an audience as possible. Its mission is both to preserve

and champion the great choral heritage and to preserve and grow a future audience for it. The group's repertoire is drawn from the passions of Founder and Conductor Harry Christophers CBE.

At home in the UK The Sixteen are 'The Voices of Classic FM', Associate Artists of The Bridgewater Hall, Artistic Associates of Kings Place, and are resident at the Wigmore Hall. The group promotes the *Choral Pilgrimage*, an annual tour of the UK's finest cathedrals, which aims to bring music back to the buildings for which it was written. The Sixteen features in the highly successful BBC television series *Sacred Music*, presented by actor Simon Russell Beale – the latest hour-long programme entitled *Monteverdi in Mantua: The Genius of the Vespers* was aired in April 2015.

The Sixteen tours throughout Europe, Asia, Australia and the Americas and has given regular performances at major concert halls and festivals worldwide with both its choir and period-instrument orchestra.

Since 2001 The Sixteen has been building its own record label, CORO, which has released 160 titles to date. Recent releases include *Francis Poulenc*, featuring music from this year's *Choral Pilgrimage*, a recording dedicated to the music of Edmund Rubbra, and the premiere recording of Sir James MacMillan's *Stabat Mater* which was commissioned by the Genesis Foundation for Harry Christophers and The Sixteen, and performed with Britten Sinfonia.

The Sixteen has a flourishing Education Department and continues to develop its work with choral music enthusiasts of all ages through: the young artist programme Genesis Sixteen; projects for primary and secondary school children; a Chorister Mentoring Scheme; and a Choral Workshop Series for amateur singers across the country. Genesis Sixteen was launched in 2011 as a new training programme for young singers, generously funded by the Genesis Foundation. Aimed at 18- to 23-year-olds, this is the UK's first fully funded choral programme for young singers designed specifically to bridge the gap from student to professional practitioner.

### **About CORO**

CORO is the award-winning record label of Harry Christophers and The Sixteen. Formed in 2001, CORO releases all of the ensemble's new recordings. The label currently boasts over 160 titles, including Allegri's *Miserere* and Tallis's *Spem in Alium*; an extensive collection of Bach and Handel titles including *Mass in B minor*, *Lutheran Masses*, *Messiah*, *Saul and Jephtha*; *Requiems* by Victoria, Brahms and Fauré; three volumes of Monteverdi's *Selva morale e spirituale* and his *Vespers of 1610*. The label has released premiere recordings of works by Antonio Teixeira, James MacMillan, Will Todd, Tarik O'Regan, Matthew Martin and Roxanna Panufnik to name but a few, and has worked with the Britten Sinfonia, BBC Philharmonic and Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields, all of whom feature on CORO recordings. The launch of CORO DVD in 2008 allowed the label to release Series One of the BBC's groundbreaking *Sacred Music* as well as four of the subsequent programmes in the series. Founder and Conductor, Harry Christophers, is also Artistic Director of Boston's celebrated Handel and Haydn Society and since 2010 CORO has released all their recordings.